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Donald Costello and Paul Velde on **LEROI JONES**

William Pfaff and J. M. Cameron on **ROBERT KENNEDY**

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EDMUND M. BURKE on the trouble with welfare

WILLIAM B. BALL on new Supreme Court rulings

F. A. MACKLIN on 'Kiss Kiss Bang Bang'

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NEWS AND VIEWS

If the Paris peace talks take the edge off popular interest in John Wayne's new movie, "The Green Berets," then so much the better for the peace talks. The film, by several reports, is well-played, scenic and exciting. But it's also a glossy piece of pro-intervention propaganda and intellectually disreputable. It deserves the worst of financial fates.

What makes the film additionally difficult to stomach is that this for-profit "entertainment" was put together largely at taxpayer expense.

There is an arrangement under Defense Department Instruction 54-10, whereby it is possible for Government agencies, including (indeed, *particularly*) the military, to give cooperation to producers of films that reflect advantageously on the U.S. And, of course, the Administration, the Pentagon and the military would be most happy about cooperating with John Wayne on any project relating to Vietnam.

No nonsense about him and his views of the war. John Wayne's the guy, remember, who commented about peace demonstrators who carry the Viet Cong flag: "I think they oughta shoot 'em. . . . A lot of our boys are getting shot lookin' at that flag. As far as I'm concerned, it wouldn't bother me a bit to pull the trigger on one of them."

That's the kind of talk that gets cooperation out of Washington.

So John Wayne got Fort Benning as a screening grounds. He got soldiers as extras (at $1.40 per hour; $100 a week, if used full-time). He got planes, choppers, rifles, mortars, machine guns, grenade launchers and whatever other war matériels were needed for realism's sake. And, as Joan Barthel pointed out last December in the New York *Times Magazine*, he even got a platoon of Hawaiian soldiers, conveniently placed on administrative leave from Fort Devens, Mass.; for, of course, he had to have Oriental-Polynesian types for close-ups.

When John Wayne decided on "The Green Berets" movie, and when the Administration laid out the red carpet for its production, the hawks had not yet lost the battle of public opinion. If matters had not changed, the film would have neatly complemented pro-war sales pitches. But the climate now is totally different, and the movie comes off as slightly sick.

This is so, even though the film, in the words of its Hollywood producer, shows "both sides": "how cruel they are and what fighters we are."

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June 6 was not a good day for one's emotions. There was the news that Robert Kennedy had died. Then there was the morning mail and another sample of the sickness of the land.

"Please help us prevent a long 'Hot-Summer' and save many lives of both whites and blacks," the president of a sales company wrote.

Help him "by publicizing the 'SUPER' ELECTRIC 'Self Defense' SHOCK STICK," described as the "perfect protection against muggers, rapists, robbers, thieves, etc." The stick, promotion material boasted, is powered by five flashlight batteries, produces a jolt of 40,000 volts, and "can't be snatched away from the user while it is turned on."

Three days later we read that in the first four months of this year, 74,241 pistols had been purchased legally in the state of California, 8,324 of them in Los Angeles alone. And we recalled the stories out of Detroit in April describing the arms race there. And we wondered if the country hadn't gone mad.

But then came news of people walking into police stations to turn in guns; of clergymen supporting gun collection centers; and of major distributors, like Sears, Roebuck & Co., instituting tight sales policies on guns and ammunition, and feelings buoyed that out of the tragedies of Memphis and Los Angeles might come a sanity of sorts to the country.

But the optimism didn't last long. The House Judiciary Committee deadlocked on June 10 over the issue of strict gun control legislation, and the suspicion returned that the U.S. could move deeper into the jungle of violence, with some clown Congressmen helping open the way.

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5 Beekman Street, the New York City building that has been a center of radical-liberal activity since the mid-nineteenth century when the New York Anti-Slavery Society was headquartered there, may soon go "square."

The War Resisters League—5 Beekman's 10th floor tenant that sublets to The Resistance, the Workshop for Nonviolence, Catholic Peace Fellowship and other peace groups—has been told by the landlord to "look elsewhere."

Seems the lawyers and insurance men downstairs have objections to the folks in the loft and are threatening to quit the premises. Can't afford that.

The War Resisters League's lease actually has another year to run. But there's a 60-day termination clause written into it, and it is that which hangs over heads.

If the eviction notice is pressed and the League is evicted, a colorful corner of history will be rounded out. 5 Beekman over the years has been a spawning place of radical movements and a holy land of pacifists. SNCC grew out of 5 Beekman; the old Civil Defense Protest Committee had its offices there; and, of course, it was where A. J. Muste presided.

Nothing is definite at the moment, but should the War Resisters League and its subtenants have to move, there's the consolation that it won't be just they who will be inconvenienced. The FBI is thought to have 5 Beekman thoroughly bugged, and that equipment is going to have to be moved and reinstalled.

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An official of the Archdiocese of Baltimore explains that Cardinal Shehan's stripping of faculties from Father Philip Berrigan means merely that he cannot preach or hear confessions. With these possibilities already cut off by the fact of his imprisonment, the punitive action taken against him becomes depressingly petty.

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Rights and Guns

Boston

To the Editors: Jean B. Elshtain, in a letter on the Second Amendment [May 24], says one has only to read the amendment to understand that the right to bear arms is a "collective" right, not an individual right.

One would have to read more than is in the amendment to come to such a conclusion. . . . We are not talking about an inalienable right when we say that the people, collectively, have a right to keep and bear arms, except that sometimes some of the people do not have the right, and sometimes again none of the people has the right. As a matter of historical fact, the first generation of Americans had this right made part of the Law of the Land to insure that no legislature, no official, and no court could assume authority to decide who could and who could not keep and bear arms. . . .

The main reason for including the militia clause in the Second Amendment, as every schoolchild knows, was as an admonition to the Federal government against the establishment of a large standing army. Memoranda submitted to the First Congress suggested that in peacetime the Federal government should find its prime source of military power for emergencies in a militia "composed of the body of the people." It is then to "the body of the people" that the right belongs. But this is not to say that the right is a "collective" right. Certainly your theologians can understand that to disarm one member would be to grant the right to one less than "the body of the people." ROBERT GRIFFITH

In Defense of Cohen

Detroit, Mich.

To the Editors: We read with dismay the piece by James Graham ("New Man as H.E.W.") on Wilbur Cohen (May 3). We sympathize with Mr. Graham's feelings and intentions, but he's got the

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THE SPOILERS

America continues to befoul its dream, driving to the wall those for whom the dream has been a hope, and the hope a motivation for continuing the struggle for something better. For the last half year, Senator McCarthy has sought to focus this struggle and keep alive the hope that positive change had not been ruled out totally from America's future. In many crucial ways he has re-politicized groups of people who had absented themselves from the political process which had scorned their views and spurned their participation. For the country as a whole he returned to the public sphere many of those problems that four years of continuous frustration and decay had relegated to the withdrawn world of the private. The new politics with McCarthy blossomed into reality, and there was light at the end of the long dark tunnel. As for Vietnam, McCarthy vowed to implement a foreign policy that would avoid its recurrence, not only for tactical reasons, but for moral as well. Last November, shortly after he declared what was a seemingly quixotic candidacy, we wrote that McCarthy offers "not only the possibility of a way out of Vietnam, but the chance for a remaking of a system where obfuscation and deceit have become the daily ration of a government to its people." That, we believe, still obtains, despite the almost overwhelming ability of the political system to make a mockery of its own ideals, as well as the numerous attempts to dismiss McCarthy as not serious, or worse, as a "protest" candidate.

This process continues, and with the defection of many former Kennedy delegates to the Humphrey camp, a perceptible *malaise* has crept back into the political atmosphere, already poisoned for so many of what President Johnson has called "the best generation" America has ever produced. The Vice President, we learn, is confident that he has already sewn up the nomination in August; unofficial tabulations concur, some holding that he has already

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gone over the top by 300 votes or more. Only a miracle, the newspapers report, could possibly rescue the McCarthy candidacy. The Senator himself, at this writing, has taken to appealing to the convention chairman and Mr. Bailey for an "open convention," as well as for the opportunity to speak to a plenary session—both rather clear indications that assessments of Mr. Humphrey's strength have not widely missed the mark, all, seemingly, in defiance of the popular will in the primary states which McCarthy or Kennedy won handily.

In their book *Presidential Elections*, professors Polsby and Wildavsky teach us that "In theory, the primary election is supposed to have the effect of bringing the nominating process to the people, but in practice it does not work that way at all. . . . [T]he decision is ultimately thrown into the hands of the men who *ought* to make it if we want a strong party system—the party leaders." (Our emphasis.) Unfortunately, a contradiction has become obvious; by allowing the current system to linger, whereby the people are consulted only *in theory*, the party system is itself threatened with chaos. By nominating Hubert Humphrey the strong party system implicitly advocated in the quotation above may well be irrevocably torn apart. Since the outset of his campaign, Senator McCarthy has stressed that not only has the war been illegitimate, but that structural changes were necessary in the very process of government, whereby the administration should be brought into greater accountability to more representative agencies. Now, as the convention nears, the point is starkly offset by the nominating process itself, and by the delegates who by their fear of change and their loyalty to a "strong party system" may very well lead the party into further and more serious estrangement.

If Vice President Humphrey is nominated and elected, there is slim chance that the country will see the alternative policy choices the McCarthy-Kennedy legions have worked to effect. With the likelihood that the opposition candidate will be Richard Nixon, the party regulars feel secure that the new politics constituency will have no other place to go and will return to the fold. Consequently, while Humphrey might begin to move left rhetorically, the chances are that he will in other respects remain with his new constituents and the policies of his mentor, policies he has vociferously and tirelessly defended. The electorate has been taken before; it can be again. The question is whether we should stand for it.

VOTES FOR 18-YEAR-OLDS?

Is the proposal to lower the voting age to 18 an idea whose time has come? The suggestion has been knocking around for years, but up to now Georgia and Kentucky are the only states to make the change in the voting age; Alaska's age requirement is 19 and Hawaii's 20. All other states stick with the traditional 21.

The idea of lowering the voting age received particular attention during World War II and the Korean war, when those 18 and up were being drafted; the popular argument then was that anyone old enough to fight for the country was old enough to vote for its leaders. This time, however, there is more behind the proposal than that somewhat folksy conviction. The obvious drive of young people today to participate in the shaping of their lives in one way or another is a big talking-point. This drive has been manifest in a positive way in Senator McCarthy's campaign, in which the victories in New Hampshire and Wisconsin are generally credited to his "Children's Crusade" ("Our Children Have Come Back to Us," a perhaps overly enthusiastic adwriter put it); and in a negative way in such institutions as Columbia where young men and young women not yet able to vote have dreamt up tactics well able to make middle-aged trustees and deans sit up and take notice.

Now under consideration again as a result of hearings before the Senate Committee on Constitutional Amendments, the 18-year-old vote proposal has some interesting sponsors, GOP minority leader Everett Dirksen for one—a fact which we must confess gives us pause. But the proposal also has the support of President Johnson and of such Senators as Mike Mansfield of Montana, Jacob Javits of New York and Birch Bayh of Indiana, all of whom back it for one reason: there are in this country something like 12 million persons between the age of 18 and 21, but the upsurge of political activism among them "is all happening outside the existing political framework," to quote Mr. Javits, and this is obviously an unhappy and potentially explosive fact. The fate of any constitutional amendment is always chancy in the extreme, but in the light of student involvement here and abroad giving the vote to those 18 and over might be one of the wisest moves the country could make.

DROP THAT GUN!

According to repeated polls of citizens at large, upwards of 70 percent of Americans favor stricter gun control. Yet, each time legislation has been proposed in Congress the National Rifle Association has called its 900,000 members to their pens and typewriters and they have dutifully barraged Congressmen and Senators with so much mail in opposition that the bills have been killed. Now, in a surge of shock and guilt after the murders of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, the public finally seems to be articulating its desire for strict gun laws and some members of Congress are paying heed. Senator Tydings' National Gun Crime Prevention Act, which would require licenses and registration for the purchase or possession of any firearm, is a sensible bill that deserves passage. It represents at least a modest advance over the present chaotic and dangerous situation.

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Another step in the right direction is the Postmaster General's recent executive order that local post offices notify the police of recipients' identities before delivering long guns sent through the mails. Eventually, all weapons should be banned from the mails.

There are other signs, too, that the public revulsion provoked by the assassinations is being translated into action. Citizens have voluntarily surrendered rifles and hand guns to the police; the children of a public school in Queens, New York, turned in their toy guns and watched as a sanitation truck ground them up; they now plan to needle local department stores to stop selling such toys; a large discount store in Indiana eliminated its ammunition sales department, its biggest money-maker; television and movie producers are deleting scenes of extreme violence from their shows. All of these things are to the good, but surely much more is required if America is to cope seriously with the problem of guns in our society. The NRA to the contrary, what is at issue is not the sportsman's allegedly inviolate right to shoot at animals. What is at issue is the proliferation of lethal firearms among private citizens and Americans' nonchalance about them, a hangover from a more primitive, frontier era.

Serious questions must therefore be asked about various facets of our gun-happy society. For example, is there any need for privately-owned target ranges, open to the public, such as the one in Los Angeles used by Sirhan for practice the day before he allegedly killed Kennedy? If such practice is necessary for some people, could the ranges not be run, and strictly supervised, by some public group such as the national guard? And why not restrict and regulate the sale of ammunition to state stores, much as the sale of liquor in some areas is limited to state package stores? And finally, if private citizens, from jittery suburban housewives to black militants who have armed themselves in self-defense against what they see as deliberate police harassment, are to be restricted in the possession of firearms, should not police departments be asked to reduce their arsenals and, wherever feasible, go among the people unarmed? In some locales, fear of riots has led police into an orgy of weapons-stockpiling and even to the purchase of tanks, armored cars and helicopters for sniping at rioters. Such police action only heightens tensions and increases chances for violence.

These suggestions, of course, are bound not only to infuriate the NRA, but also to upset arms and ammunition manufacturers and merchants, and owners of target ranges, sporting goods and department stores. Yet public safety must take precedence over private profits. It is as simple as that. As for worried policemen, what ever happened to the idea of public *service*?

America has suffered enough, in national honor and in the waste of life, from that dubious symbol of masculinity, the gun. It is time to cool it—all around.

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FROM ENGLAND

THE DEATH OF KENNEDY

When, only a few weeks ago, I wrote a short note for *Commonweal* on the death of Martin Luther King [April 26] I felt compelled to look back to what I had written in 1963 on the death of President Kennedy. I also mentioned, as among the political phenomena that surrounded the murder of King, what I called "the serio-comic reaching out after power of Senator Robert Kennedy." I was rebuked by an American friend for speaking of him in this way; and now his death chides me for too lightly framing so ungracious an expression. I cannot, even on June 6, pretend that I do not think there was something off-putting about Robert Kennedy's attempt to reap where Eugene McCarthy had plowed and sown, but his dreadful death, mourned here as in the United States, has plainly robbed us of an engaging man, a charismatic leader of extraordinary power, and one of the very few men of potential greatness left in the rather shabby drama that is the parliamentary politics of the Western world. The consequences of the murder in Los Angeles may be very evil for the United States and for the rest of the world as well.

Many Americans have expressed their shame and despair—the word "despair" was used in this connection by the London correspondent of the *N.Y. Times*—as is no doubt proper. It is an extraordinary society that, after the murders of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King, is still reluctant to regulate by law the sale and possession of rifles; that takes it as commonplace that juvenile delinquents fleeing from the police should be shot down; that in a year has more murders in Houston, Texas, than in the whole of Great Britain. But Englishmen, living in what is still by far the gentlest society in the world, can be too smug about this, and Americans can beat their breasts too savagely.

America is an open society in which the violence of men, as individuals and as groups, is not put down by the violence, or the threat of it, of a central power. Even the heavily armed police of the great cities are in part contenders for power on behalf of the affluent ruling groups and against the urban poor, rather than instruments of a power standing, or seeming to stand, above the conflicts of society. American society displays openly, and this is not all loss, the conflicts and the violence that are endemic in all inegalitarian and competitive societies but that in

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older, more traditional societies express themselves in enigmatic and muted forms.

This is not to make excuses for police or mob violence or individual murder, but to suggest that in America the realities of our kind of society (and by this I mean the Soviet Union as much as Britain or the United States) are nakedly displayed; and where truth appears so much on the surface of things, there the remedy for evils may also be plainer than where the truth is disguised. Again, American society, so fluid, so dynamic, so varied in its cultural traditions and in the peoples who constitute it, so rich in its hopes, so bitter in its despairs, set in a frame that is both moving in its natural beauty and majesty and squalid in what man without piety has so often made of nature, this society endures more punishment from blind social forces—the technological revolutions that drive men hither and thither, the market forces that produce the urban ghettos and the handsome suburbs, the asphalt jungles and the playgrounds of Florida and the West Coast—than any European society; and not all the responses to this punishment are evil and cruel.

Here we may be thankful for the relative gentleness and tranquillity of our society; but sometimes we envy the extraordinary purity, the heroism, the vitality, that have shown themselves in so many ways in the United States in recent years. One thinks of achievements, at present undervalued, of the young men and women who gave themselves to the civil rights movement, of those whose conscientious opposition to the war in Vietnam has gone far beyond the writing of articles in the press, of the spontaneity and good nature in both black and white Americans that so much refreshes the visitor from Europe; and if one compares the qualities of such a leader in politics as Eugene McCarthy or Robert Kennedy with the best we have in Europe, there too we are envious.

America's presidential choices are America's own affair. Advice from one who stands outside the issues and the conflict would properly be resented. But anyone may express a hope; and it is certainly true that many, many Europeans now hope that the support that was divided between Kennedy and McCarthy will go to McCarthy; and that McCarthy will in due course become the Democratic candidate and then the President. Were Vice President Humphrey or Mr. Nixon to become President, this would for many Europeans be a sign that everything that was tired, dispirited, fearful and petty in American life had asserted itself. So painful a sacrifice as the death of Robert Kennedy should have a richer and nobler consequence than this.

J. M. CAMERON

(J. M. Cameron, English correspondent for Commonweal, *is a professor of philosophy and Master of Rutherford College in the University of Kent at Canterbury.)*

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AFTER ROBERT KENNEDY

This country needs both reconciliation and reform. Can we have both? Robert Kennedy, even though his speeches were in many respects less radical than Eugene McCarthy's, conveyed an abrasive and driving sense of change to the poor and dispossessed of American society. He was an activist. Activism—and the spirit and articulation of action, justice seen to be done—is indispensable if the rebellious and sometimes nihilistic impulses of the poor are to be overcome, the scandal of their condition ended. The two nations of America—one of them, the bourgeois nation, dominant, still uneasily complacent, defensive, and the other, the poor nation, virtually disenfranchised and abandoned since the Depression was ended by World War II—have to be reconciled if we are not to become a frankly repressive society, increasingly resorting to force, official as well as unofficial.

But radical change in the condition of the poor and of Negroes disturbs and frightens the bourgeois nation, whatever the latter's generalized goodwill toward the poor. The poor will not become more peaceful, more content, less troublesome as reform takes place. Revolutionary impulses follow reform. A repressed class of population ordinarily awakens into violent action only after change has been proven possible. Then the clamor is for quicker and more drastic change than the government or the dominating classes are willing to allow. And if the latter have a bad conscience, a loss of morale, if they feel themselves losing control of developments and driven on a course they cannot interpret, then they may turn panicky—or reactionary. We should not delude ourselves that this society could not be broken up by forces of rebellion-repression.

The most compelling case for Kennedy as Presidential candidate was that only activism and innovation could carry us through a drastic social transition: it was the argument from domestic crisis, and it had to acknowledge that a Kennedy Administration was likely to provoke continued internal conflict. This would be conflict between the "new politics" and the old, between left and right sectors of American political society. Like the Roosevelt Administrations, Kennedy could have sought structural reform in the society but at the price of bitterness, even hatred, from a part of America—Goldwater's America—which increasingly feels itself displaced. Until recently the liberal majority and the Republican Right minority were the contenders for the American soul.

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Now, increasingly, it is a liberal majority and an inchoate Left, the old Right pushed aside. But the Right's sense of futility reinforces its anger, its own alienation.

We are in the dangerous situation of actually or potentially alienated minorities on the Left and Right, and in the center an anxious majority without confidence in its ability to solve the nation's crisis. The majority's leaders—the "establishment" leaders—have provided an essentially considerate and meliorist domestic program and a foreign policy of vast ambition and intensity; and both now are failing. The Kennedy and McCarthy candidacies acknowledged that this was happening, but McCarthy alone suggested a grasp of why it was happening. Kennedy was—as McCarthy remarked—a problem-identifier: "Here's a problem. Here's another." But is McCarthy a problem-solver?

He has offered curiously little that is specific, but he has understood a fundamental problem, which is that we are emotionally and psychologically overextended. Our domestic problems are inescapable. Our foreign problems have in considerable measure been self-inflicted. They are the result of sentimental over-simplifications and the kind of thoughtless messianism which could lead Kennedy, in declaring for the Presidency, to claim for America "our right to moral leadership of the planet." To cut loose from that, as McCarthy has done, is indispensable because only this can reduce the stress, the interrelated sense of crisis and powerlessness, which lies behind much of our national tension. There has been an externalization of American problems, a displacement of anxiety from real but intractable domestic problems to foreign enterprises which have in them a high degree of compensatory illusion. Our present crisis is provoked by the fact that reality has robbed us of that emotional release. Now we can no longer find abroad a gratification which in the past could justify or compensate for what was wrong at home. If we are in deep trouble it is because illusion is denied us by the Viet Cong, the North Vietnamese, the French—and by the militants of Harlem and Watts, and the appalling spectacle of starvation in sections of this country.

Reconciliation, then, must come from realism. The strength and attraction of the McCarthy candidacy is that it vividly expresses this openness to reality. Its ostensible weakness, its lack of specific programs, may also be a strength in that it evidences a seriousness and humility before reality. But to say that is to make an intellectual judgment which may not count for much in the racial cauldrons of the cities.

McCarthy is the only new man among all the candidates; all of the rest deal anxiously in the devalued ideas of the 1950's and the 1930's. He is the only man, it seems to me, who offers a serious chance of both national reconciliation and reform. Those who once supported Robert Kennedy because of his passion for change, the power of his concern for men, could lend to McCarthy, the realist—and, it may be, the pessimist, the ironist—something of this Kennedy passion. They could lend activism and reformist energy and thought to a candidacy which already affords the only hope of realistic reappraisal for the country. As McCarthy remarked in Oregon, "my strategy is to walk through the Red Sea barefoot." It may amount to that, but unless the experiment is carried through, and supported by those best able to give it support, this country may find that it has only now entered its time of troubles. WILLIAM PFAFF

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'ALLEN' AND 'FLAST'

THE SCHOOL AID DECISIONS

On June 10 the Supreme Court, in a pair of decisions, took a giant step toward resolution of what for more than a century has been the inflamed core problem in American church-state relations: the so-called "parochial school aid" question. In one of the cases, *Flast v. Cohen,* it held that federal taxpayers can now sue to challenge federal statutes on grounds that they violate the Free Exercise or Establishment Clauses of the First Amendment. In the other, *Board of Education v. Allen,* it held constitutional New York State's program for the lending of textbooks to private (including parochial) school children.

Rather wild interpretations of the cases have appeared in press accounts. The first has been described as a merely "procedural" case (dealing with lawyers' technicalities as to how to get a hearing). The second has been described as a "religious" case. Neither description is quite on target. The most important aspect of *Flast* is its recognition of religious liberty. The most important aspect of *Allen* is its recognition of public need.

The *Flast* case upset a 45-year-old Supreme Court ruling which barred suits against acts of Congress brought by persons in the role of federal taxpayers. The Court had then held that an individual had no standing to complain of how Congress spent the taxes raised from the citizenry, because "his interest in the moneys of the Treasury . . . is shared with millions of others," is too "minute," "indeterminable," "remote" to justify consideration by the court of the question of whether the expenditure is constitutional. Of recent years, church-state ultraseparationists such as Leo Pfeffer and Senator Sam J. Ervin, Jr., the ACLU and POAU, have battled in court and before Congress to get this bar to suits lifted in the special area

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of legislation deemed to confer benefits on church-affiliated institutions. They naturally met much public resistance from spokesmen for such institutions. In *Flast* (a suit to enjoin expenditures under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which were deemed to violate church-state separation) the plaintiffs, represented by Mr. Pfeffer, pressed home their claim that the Court recognize their standing to sue and rule on the merits. In its June 10 decision, the Court declared they had standing. It will later rule on the merits.

If a rationale be sought in justification of a decision which will doubtlessly add to the burdened docket of the Supreme Court, it can only be said to lie in the high premium which the Court plainly places upon religious liberty. David Brinkley, in his newscast the night of June 10, said the Court had practically issued an open invitation to litigants anxious to shoot down federal parochial school aid and like public programs. The *Flast* ruling may indeed be greeted by many as such. But what the Court has said in essence is that the area of religious liberty is so vitally important that the judicial forum must be as free at the federal level as it already is at the state level for the contesting of expenditures deemed to impinge upon religious liberty. It is to be noted that this forum is now made free, not only to POAU and other zealots who have Catholics on the brain, but to *all* comers—*e.g.*, a taxpayer who might assert that a given federal statute calls for expenditures promoting anti-religion. The docket, as it grows, may show a remarkably varied lineup of defendants.

Not the least interesting aspect of *Flast* is its relationship to the second decision, *Board of Education v. Allen*. Some plaintiff taxpayers who rush into court through the now open doorway of *Flast* may find themselves gaveled out of court by *Allen*. In *Allen*, upholding by a 6-to-3 vote New York's program of free textbook loans to parochial school pupils, the Supreme Court laid down in unmistakably clear terms a broad doctrine governing conditions under which public support may be rendered to activities conducted in religiously affiliated schools. In a critically important sentence, Justice White, writing for the majority, pointed out that the Court had long recognized that "religious schools pursue two goals, religious instruction and secular education." By this recognition the Court discountenanced the main argument which the plaintiffs had raised in their briefs, namely, that "there is no such thing as secular education in a parochial school." This argument has been the bedrock presumption in all litigations, legislative arguments and propaganda against parochial school aid. The presumption is now judicially deflated in favor of the next chief point established by the majority opinion—namely, that the *secular*, or public, function of church-related education may, under due safeguards, be publicly aided without violation of the First Amendment.

This point is not exactly new doctrine. It is, rather, a firm and clear explication of doctrine which the Court had set forth in its Bible-reading decision of 1963, when it had said that the test for distinguishing between permissible and forbidden involvements between church and state, in a given public program, is whether the program has a "secular legislative purpose and a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion."

In *Allen* the Court put that formula directly to use as the test of the New York textbook program. The test is pragmatic rather than doctrinaire. It does not permit solution of serious social problems by simplistic slogans of "church-state separation" or "child benefit." Rather, it permits the Court to *weigh* factual situations on a case-by-case basis to determine whether the legislation fulfills a public purpose or whether, on balance, it promotes religion. Looking to the realities of present needs in education, the role of nonpublic schools in education, the very explicit safeguards of secularity, as well as the careful public controls, embodied in the New York legislation, the Court found that that legislation passed the "secular purpose—primary effect" test with flying colors.

If the *Flast* decision triggers more litigation, the *Allen* decision should trigger more legislation. But the "parochial school aid" legislation which it triggers is going to have to meet the tests heavily underscored in *Allen*. Those who seek for parochial education *general* public aid (without severe limitation to carefully demarked secular objectives), or who seek it as having "a right to it" without public controls, will find no comfort in the *Allen* decision. Those parochial school supporters who, however, are willing to let the secular be the secular and will accept state quality and fiscal controls (limited, of course, to the secular activity supported) may find not only their "aid" legislation upheld in the courts but the performance of their schools enabled to be upgraded.

Finally, the *Flast-Allen* decisions should help calm interreligious controversy in the U.S.A. The constitutional channel to state aid to nonpublic education is now rendered wide enough for flow, too narrow for flood. The constitutional channel to complain of flooding is wide open to all. Question marks upon which much of the public has been hooked for years are removed by two wise decisions of the high court. WILLIAM B. BALL

(William B. Ball was counsel before the U.S. Supreme Court to the New York parents who intervened in the Textbook Loan Act case.)

Summer Schedule

In keeping with the usual practice, *Commonweal* will again appear on alternate weeks during July-September. Forthcoming issues will be dated July 12, July 26, August 9, August 23, September 6 and September 20. From then on, we will resume our normal weekly publishing schedule.

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The poor should not be at the whims of local officials

THE TROUBLE WITH WELFARE

EDMUND M. BURKE

The war against poverty took many setbacks in the first half of the 90th Congress, but probably its severest defeat was the decision on the Social Security Bill. Admittedly Social Security payments were increased 13 percent, thereby boosting a million aged over the poverty wall, but the most primitive welfare restrictions in a decade were also passed. By cracking down on the number of fatherless children who can be supported by public welfare and by establishing compulsory work requirements for relief recipients, the Congress returned to the poor-law principles of punishment and retribution.

Yet, the decision only mirrors a growing dissatisfaction with the public welfare system—a dissatisfaction that is no longer partisan. Soaring relief costs in city after city, despite six years of continuous economic growth, has increased opposition to welfare. In New York City, for example, although unemployment has declined by 40,000 in the last three years, the relief rolls are climbing at a rate of 12,000 a month. And New York City is not an isolated example. Relief costs are also rising in the once immune suburbs, and rising in some suburban towns at rates faster than the central cities.

Surprisingly the long-time supporters of public welfare are just as critical—and also disenchanted. Welfare has been found wanting as an anti-poverty measure. Indeed, public welfare fosters poverty by supporting welfare recipients at levels far less than what the President's Council of Economic Advisors has defined as poverty ($3,000 for a family of four; $1,500 for individuals), prompting Mitchell Ginsberg, New York City's welfare head, to announce that the system is "bankrupt" and should be "thrown out." Senator Robert Kennedy was even more critical. "Welfare," he claimed, "is a system of handouts, a second-rate set of social services, which damages and demeans its recipients."

Studies, commission reports and government white papers confirm the criticism. Within the past two years two federal investigations (the National Commission on Technology Study and the Advisory Council on Public Welfare) have assailed the nation's welfare programs. The President's Riot Commission Report indicts welfare for contributing "materially to the tensions and social disorganization that have led to civil disorders."

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Welfare fails, and will continue to fail, because it is a system full of inconsistencies and contradictions. America's public welfare program is a hodgepodge of programs, added to periodically (the program to aid the disabled, for example, began in 1950; aid to unemployed fathers was initiated in 1961) and amended every two years. Even more defeating, the goals of public welfare are based upon misconceptions and stereotypes. The too common view that welfare assistance is for those temporarily down on their luck is false. And programs based on this view become not solution but illusions.

Retraining and the G.A.I.

Job training programs are a good example. However well motivated, they simply bypass the vast majority of welfare recipients. The Congressionally appointed Advisory Council on Public Welfare estimated that there are only about 50,000 unemployed fathers out of a total of 7.4 million welfare recipients who might be eligible for employment. In New York City where more people are on welfare than live in almost any city in the country, the picture is just as dismal for job training enthusiasts. Out of the 600,000 welfare recipients, only 2,600 men, as Mayor John Lindsay reported, "have enough occupational ability to move into employment with considerable training and rehabilitation." The remaining public welfare clients are too young, too old, or too disabled. The increase in welfare rolls is primarily due to the increase in the dependent age population groups. Reflected in the growth of welfare is the proportionate rise during the past eight years in the numbers of aged and children under 18.

Admittedly, mothers supported under the dependent children's program might benefit from some vocational training and thereby leave the welfare rolls. But here again there are many fallacies. The Advisory Committee's study found that only 20 to 30 percent of the million mothers supported by welfare might have the mental and physical ability to move into the job world—if there were day-care facilities for their children. Unfortunately there are not enough qualified day-care facilities to meet demands of the current working-mother labor force. In 1965 the Department of Labor estimated that licensed facilities existed for only 255,000 of the millions of children who needed day-care facilities. Incidentally, this so-

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lution will increase rather than decrease welfare costs. Estimates for day-care facilities range as high as $1,200 annually for each child.

This is not to say that job training programs should be completely discounted. For the marginally employed, the breadwinners of the 26 million Americans not on welfare but still living below the poverty line, job training serves a vital and crucial purpose. Raising skills in an increasingly automated and complex job world is now an economic necessity. But this only points up the distinction which has to be made. Job training will serve an insignificant percent of the welfare poor.

Guaranteed income proposals, such as the negative income tax, present a different kind of dilemma. That welfare recipients will be promised financial support based on need is their chief virtue. But their virtues must be measured against the disadvantages of practical politics. There is serious question that Congress is ready to adopt such programs. There is considerable doubt, too, that the general population is ready to approve programs guaranteeing income to people for not working. Too many are already suspicious about public welfare. Meanwhile, however, welfare recipients wait this side of despair.

In truth, however, the guaranteed income programs promise welfare clients what Congress and the Federal Government, beginning with the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, have always promised them—a minimum standard of health and decency. The promise has never been fulfilled because in point of fact there is no national welfare program. There never has been one. The Federal Government may foot most of the welfare bill—60 percent in most states, two-thirds of the cost in 22 states—but the states and local communities control and administer public welfare. There is, then, not one public welfare program but literally thousands. And the result has been disastrous.

The System's Abuses

By giving the states the right to set eligibility requirements, abuses—legal and illegal—have become rampant. Individuals, for example, who are eligible for a program in one state are ineligible in another. To receive assistance under the Aid to the Blind program in South Carolina, you need to have lost your sight while living in that state. Furthermore, all but ten states insist that welfare clients be residents of the state for a year—in some instances three years—before they are eligible for assistance. (The Supreme Court, incidentally, is currently reviewing that device of border customs for the poor.)

Wholesale discrimination, as Congressional and voluntary commissions discovered last year, is practiced against the Negro. Arbitrary and picayune regulations are commonplace. County officials in the South regularly remove Negroes from welfare rolls for engaging in civil rights activities. A voluntary citizen group investigating hunger and malnutrition among the poor uncovered the case of a mother of eight children in Dorchester County, South Carolina, who was not only deprived of assistance for her family, but was refused medical treatment when her ninth child was being born. She lay in bed a day with her child half born and was given help only after her neighbors threatened to write to the Federal Government.

Local control has also created a situation in which cities and counties violate their own state welfare requirements. Each state, for example, establishes a minimum standard of living budget for welfare clients. Food, rent, clothing, laundry costs are figured out in detail even down to how many bars of soap are permitted a year. In practice, however, only a percentage of the state budget is actually granted to the welfare recipient. In Texas, for instance, a family of four on Aid to Families with Dependent Children is required to receive a $154 a month budget, but gets $98. Mississippi sets the minimum at $194, but no county pays more than $50. Northern states are just as bad. Some counties in Ohio have set grants at fifty percent of the state-established budget.

Variations in welfare payments would naturally be expected in a program controlled by state and local communities. Yet the extreme valuations in relief grants from one state to another defy explanation. The average payment in May 1966, for example, for a dependent child ranged from $8.71 in one state to $52.28 in another, and for an aged recipient from a low of $40.92 to a high of $123.16. And neither do welfare grants reflect a state's own fiscal ability. Delaware and Nevada rank second and third respectively in average per capita income, yet are forty-ninth and fiftieth in per capita expenditures for assistance payments.

The permissiveness of the Social Security Act even goes to the extent of allowing states the right to decide whether or not they will participate in the federally supported programs. In Nevada there is no program to aid the disabled. In only 21 states is federal aid available to families in need because a parent is unemployed. States also can reject part of a program. By refusing to grant dependent children a minimum of $32 a month, forty percent of the states actually forfeited $105 million Federal dollars last year.

Without a national welfare program, the Federal Government has been forced to set up additional welfare programs lest complete catastrophe result. Public housing, the Agricultural Department's food stamp and food surplus programs, the Department of Labor's job training projects, indeed, even the War on Poverty, are responses to the refusal of the state and county welfare officials to provide the poor with enough income to eat and live at the barest level of decency. But the Federal Government in too many instances is powerless.

Public welfare was designed to fail. Too much control was given to the states and clearly the states and local

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communities failed in their responsibilities to the poor. The solution, then, is to nationalize public welfare. Take it completely out of the hands of state and local governments. The advantages are obvious.

The welfare poor would be treated equally and probably with more dignity irrespective of where they lived. Under a national welfare system, the poor would not be at the mercy of the whims and caprices of local welfare officials. Welfare payments would be standardized throughout the nation with a greater likelihood that assistance would be based on the individual needs of the poor, rather than on how worthy or compliant or obsequious the poor act towards county officials.

Administrative costs would be lessened. Certainly if every county, and in some states every city and hamlet, operates its own welfare department, costs are going to be higher than if there was a single unified system. Obviously a great proportion of the welfare bill is eaten up by administrative overhead in Georgia with 159 local welfare departments, or in Virginia with 129, or Kansas with 105.

Eliminated also would be the grant-in-aid system which is probably the most confusing and complex ever developed. In fact it defies description. To give one example: the Federal Government grants to the state, for an old age recipient, 31/37th of approximately half of the grant, and then pays anywhere from fifty to sixty percent of the remaining half of the grant, depending upon the individual state's per capita income. Local welfare agencies are also reimbursed for part of the administrative and the social services costs of this same aged client.

What this all means of course is that each state and local welfare agency has to establish an elaborate accounting and reporting system. In order not to lose any Federal money, welfare workers are required to count each unit of work. Edgar May, whose articles on public welfare earned him a Pulitzer Prize, reported that it took 24 separate pieces of paper to give a client her first welfare check. The Federal-state-local method of administering welfare has created a program that puts a premium on bookkeeping, thus increasing the costs of public welfare.

Nationalizing the welfare system would also go a long way toward solving what is probably the second most critical problem in public welfare—recruiting and holding competent social workers. Most welfare agencies—all in the major urban centers where the welfare problem has become acute—operate with severe staff shortages. With expanding programs, a growing dependent age population, the shortage is expected to become even more severe. Yet welfare agencies cannot now find replacements for current vacancies. There are about 12,000 social work vacancies across the country. And what few people are attracted to welfare work rarely stay beyond two or three years.

Many young people enter public welfare work sincerely motivated. But their zeal to help is quickly tempered by the discovery that less time is spent as social workers than as clerks. The principal task is determining who is eligible and how much they will receive, and remembering that the city has one set of requirements, the county another, the state another and the Federal department still another. Most of the time of the public welfare worker is spent in filling out forms, doling out checks, writing up budgets, sending out memoranda, investigating clients, attending staff meetings, and responding to crises. Aside from the mound of paperwork, the new social worker discovers that he has responsibility for 75 to 100 cases. It soon becomes apparent that regular visits, periodic sessions to help an unwed mother with her children, or to find a job training program for an unemployed father, is just impossible. This is enough to discourage even the most dedicated.

Oddly there is, as well, a great deal of waste of social work personnel. There is, for example, no distinction about the kinds of services that can be provided welfare clients. As it is now, every welfare client is assigned a

social worker. The intention supposedly is to provide counseling and rehabilitation services in the hopes of getting the client off welfare roles. But if the majority of welfare clients are dependent upon welfare because of age or physical handicaps, why rehabilitation? What purpose is served, for example, by assigning social workers to "aged" welfare clients? Interestingly, people over 65 on Social Security are not assigned social workers. It would seem far more sensible and far more economical to concentrate rehabilitation services upon children or unemployed fathers. The objective should be to break the cycle of poverty for those who need not be dependent upon welfare.

Finally, a career in public welfare is not attractive to many young people precisely because there are no career opportunities. It is a dead-end job. Social workers are restricted for advancement to the welfare agency which hired them. In small and medium-size cities, often this means no advancement at all. In larger cities there are possibilities for moving up to supervisory positions. But this is about all. Administrative positions in local welfare departments are political appointments. Although

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the Department of Health, Education and Welfare strongly urges welfare departments to hire college graduates, what college graduate is willing to enter a career with questionable possibilities for advancement? As a result, welfare agencies attract the unmotivated or young college girls who resign within two years to marry and raise a family. In many cities the turnover of social work staff is as high as 50 percent.

A trend towards centralizing welfare has already begun. Massachusetts abolished its 270 local welfare departments and inaugurated a state-wide system in January. Ohio moved to more state control of public welfare in 1966. New York is thinking of doing the same. Mayor John Lindsay is sponsoring legislation for a complete state takeover of welfare. Doubtless in the next half dozen years the states will discover that it is just as inefficient to run fifty welfare departments as a thousand and fifty and thus petition the Federal Government to assume the entire welfare program. The obvious question is why wait?

LeROI JONES—I

BLACK MAN AS VICTIM

DONALD P. COSTELLO

LeRoi Jones, in a 1962 address to the American Society for African Culture, insisted that the job of the Negro writer was to portray "the emotional history of the black man in this country: as its victim and its chronicler." Jones the dramatist has taken his own advice. The black man is the victim in Jones' plays, and Jones himself, with an increasingly strident voice, is the black man's chronicler, and, perhaps, America's chronicler.

The plays have been few. In 1961, 16 performances of Jones' *Dante* were presented at the Off-Bowery Theatre. This was a short dramatization, a modern parallel of the False Comforters theme, from *The Systems of Dante's Hell*, Jones' book of fiction. But 1964 was the big year for LeRoi Jones drama, with productions in New York of *The Baptism*, *The Toilet*, *Dutchman*, and *The Slave*.

The Baptism, presented at Writers' Stage Theatre off-Broadway in 1964, is not a racial play. It tries hard to be a comedy-of-cruelty, but it tries harder to be blasphemous. Most of the action takes place on the altar of a Baptist church, with characters including a homosexual in red leotards who does ballet steps, who sprinkles the assembly with confetti, and jokingly asserts that he is "the Son of Man." A 15-year-old girlishly handsome boy comes to be baptized, to be forgiven for 1,095 masturbations, one of which is described in detail, and for which Jones delights in finding synonyms. The minister claims at the altar that his usherettes are "brides of the Lord's son, our own Jesus Christ"; and they claim that the masturbating boy is actually the Lord's son because "it was he who popped us." After the boy admits that he *is* the Son of God, he kills the usherettes, for "they had no charity." A motorcycle messenger from "The Man" comes to recall this Son of God who, although he was sent to save the earth, has been an absolute failure. God is tired of the world's mess, we are told, and plans to grenade the whole works. But the boy-Christ won't leave, for his job is unfinished; so the messenger hits him with a tire iron and carries him off, home to God, on the back of the motorcycle. In a few hours before the grenade will destroy the world, the homosexual decides to cruise the bars, wondering what happened "to that cute little religious fanatic." Jones strains to be shocking; and the play ends up incoherent and adolescent, with scatter-shot fury. In his racial plays, his fury finds his target.

The Toilet is an ugly but affecting racial play. It was presented at St. Mark's Playhouse in a double bill with *The Slave*. Jones tells us, in an "Introduction by the Playwright," that "*The Toilet* is about the lives of black people. White people tell me it is not. They have no way of knowing, but they insist they do."

In *The Toilet*, the victim—Jones again uses that word in his "Introduction"—is a black boy named Ray Foots who cannot express his love for a white boy named Karolis because of what Jones calls the "brutality" of the "social order." And one of the major achievements of the play is the stunning force with which that social order is shown to *be* brutal. The specific social order created by the play is that of high school boys, most of them black. And the setting is a stinking "latrine of some institution." Throughout the play, comment is made on the social order by boys who turn their backs to the audience to urinate into one of the urinals which make up the visual line of the set, and by a boy who goes behind a toilet partition and is found "pulling his watchamacallit," and by verbal obscenities, some trite and some imaginative.

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When Karolis is dragged into the latrine by a group of black boys, he has been beat up, is "crying softly, with blood on his shirt and face." Karolis has been dragged to the toilet to fight Foots, the leader of the Negro gang, because of a homosexual love letter which Karolis has sent Foots, a letter in which Karolis said that Ray Foots was beautiful. Foots feels pity—and a kind of returned love—for Karolis, but because of social pressure from the gang, and because of Karolis' own insistence, Foots does fight the already-beaten Karolis. Eventually Karolis is jumped by all the gang and is left bleeding on the toilet floor, draped with wet toilet paper. Karolis, the white boy, is more obviously—but to Jones less profoundly—a victim than is Foots, the black boy. It is the white boy who is beaten. But the meaning of the play comes from Karolis' revelation that the black boy he really loves is a hidden beautiful boy named Ray, not the Foots of this stinking toilet who is visible to his gang members. "Did I call you Ray in that letter—or Foots? . . . That's who I want to kill. Foots. . . . His name is Ray, not Foots. You stupid bastards. I love somebody you don't even know."

After Karolis is left bleeding on the toilet floor, Foots sneaks back in, kneels by Karolis' form and, weeping, cradles his head in his arms as he wipes the blood from Karolis' face. For all of its ugliness, *The Toilet* is, as Jones has written, "a play about love." It is a play about a love between a white boy and a black boy, a love which, because of the social order in which the black people live, cannot be expressed on any level. Brutality results, says Jones, in any social order, "if it is not an order which can admit of any man's beauty." The beauty of Foots remains hidden. Both the black and the white are therefore victims; and the chronicler, Jones, in this play talks—for the last time—about love.

The victim in *Dutchman* is Clay, and this is a play about hatred. *Dutchman* was produced off-Broadway at the Cherry Lane Theatre, and it won the *Village Voice*'s Obie Award for the Best American Play of the 1963-64 season. Subsequently it was presented at the Festival of Two Worlds, at Spoleto. It is the most widely known of Jones' works, primarily through the 1967 movie version, directed by Anthony Harvey.

In *Dutchman*, Jones again, as he had in *The Toilet*, speaks through controlled dramatic art. He controls his form. He embodies his hatred in two characters; he is still a dramatist. In an interview, Jones said, "*Dutchman* is about the difficulty of becoming a man in America." The boy who is "desperately trying to become a man" is Clay, twenty-year-old Negro. Lula, beautiful young white woman on the make, sits next to Clay on the subway. In brilliant dialogue (by far the best art Jones has shown in any of his plays) Clay's lack of *place* is revealed to the audience. He doesn't belong, for he doesn't acknowledge his blackness. Lula has him pegged: "You're a well-known type," and "I know you like the palm of my hand." He's a suburbanite, living in New Jersey with his parents; in college he thought of himself as Baudelaire. Never did he think of himself as a black nigger. He's a poser, not a man; he doesn't acknowledge what he *is*. Lula takes hold of his jacket and shouts: "Boy, those narrow-shoulder clothes come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by. A three-button suit. What right do you have to be wearing a three-button suit and striped tie? Your grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard."

Scene I ends with Lula's insistence that she knows the truth about Clay. Ivy league clothes won't hide his blackness. And his submission is only a pretense. He cannot be free from his history, the heritage of slavery; and she cannot be free from her history, the heritage of oppression. And simmering under the pretense of Clay's submission to the white order is the necessity of the slave to murder his oppressor: "You're a murderer, Clay, and you know it."

By the end of Scene I the mood of the play is taut. The victim will not stay victimized peacefully. And by this time the observer hears obviously the voice of the chronicler, the tortured autobiographical gropings of LeRoi Jones himself, faced with "the difficulty of becoming a man in America." In a preface to a 1966 collection of essays, ironically called *Home*, Jones tells us something about that constant struggle of his own which, in *Dutchman*, is mirrored in the character of Clay: "One truth anyone reading these pieces ought to get is the sense of movement—the struggle, in myself, to understand where and who I am, and to move with that understanding." All these movements, Jones writes, "seem to me to have been always toward the thing that I had coming into the world, with no sweat: my blackness." And, he concludes, "by the time this book appears, I will be even blacker."

In Scene II, Clay becomes blacker. Lula goads him to it. She mocks him, wildly, dancing in the aisle: "You middle-class black bastard." "You liver-lipped white man." "You ain't no nigger, you're just a dirty white man." She commands Clay to do what Jones himself, in his dramatic career, has been doing: "Get up and scream at these people. Like scream meaningless shit in these hopeless faces." Clay finally answers back. He slaps her across the mouth as hard as he can, and announces: "Now shut up and let me talk." And then Clay launches into a long and obscene rage against Lula and against all whites who profess to understand the Negro. Lula cannot understand: "You great liberated whore! You fuck some black man, and right away you're an expert on black people." And neither can any whitey understand or help a black man come to an image of himself. So, Clay insists, through his teeth: "Let me be who I feel like being. Uncle Tom. Thomas. Whoever. It's none of your business." It's as simple as that. Whitey can tell the black man nothing because whitey can understand nothing. As early as 1961, Jones had written: "Liberals think that they are peculiarly qualified to tell American Negroes

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and the other oppressed peoples of the world how to wage their struggles." In *Dutchman*, the Jones reply to whitey is "It's none of your business."

Clay knows that it is insane to conceal his blackness, but Jones gives him only two alternatives. He can continue the insanity of living half-hidden in whitey's world; or he can relieve his insanity by asserting his blackness through murder: "Murder. Just murder! Would make us all sane." He warns Lula not to teach the black man the way of the white man, not to talk too much about the advantages of Western rationalism or the great intellectual legacy of the white man, because if the black man does learn the lesson of the white man, he will adopt his weapon: "All of those ex-coons will be stand-up Western men, with eyes for clean hard useful lives, sober, pious and sane, and they'll murder you." Clay chooses to avoid the easy, luxurious way of murder ("It takes no great effort. To kill you soft idiots."). He chooses, instead, to stay in his insanity, to deny his blackness, to deny the murder that would liberate him: "Ahh, shit, who needs it? I'd rather be a fool. Insane. Safe with my words, and no deaths, and clean, hard thoughts."

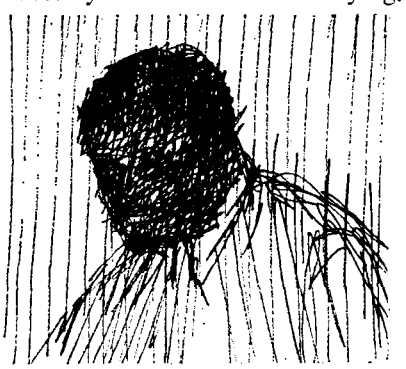
But in the Jones world murder is inevitable once white and black confront each other. So, although Clay decides to remain insane by not murdering, Lula turns him into the complete victim by plunging a knife into his chest. In a ritual act, with the collaboration of the rest of the congregation in the subway, whitey kills the black man as indeed whitey has been doing all along. The black man who refuses to murder is himself murdered.

If Clay is the black man, if Clay is Jones (Jones has written often that everything he writes is necessarily written specifically *as* a black man), who is Lula? She is of course America, especially white liberal America who interferes with the black man, who professes friendship as it murders. Jones insists that Clay and Lula are not symbols; but then he goes on to talk of them as if they are. Lula, he insists, "does not represent anything—she is one. And perhaps that thing is America, or at least its spirit." When the critics complained that Lula is too crazy, extreme, neurotic, Jones replied, "You remember America, don't you, where they have unsolved murders happening before your eyes on television. How crazy, extreme, neurotic, does that sound? Lula, for all her alleged insanity, just barely reflects the insanity of this hideous place."

Harold Clurman has pointed out that if *Dutchman* is angry, *The Slave* is rabid. Anger, he says, has a definite form; rage only smolders and explodes. The form of *The Slave* is supposedly a fable in which a debate takes place. But rather it is a tirade delivered by Walker, a Negro who is leading a violent murderous black rebellion which is in the midst of blowing up "this city . . . this country . . . or world." Walker talks at Easley, the white liberal intellectual who is now married to Walker's white ex-wife. But it is not a debate. It is merely pages of invective in which Walker speaks Jones' doctrine of race violence. "This hideous place" is no longer encompassed into a dramatic space small enough for Jones to control. Here he does not reflect America through a few boys in a toilet or through a white-black couple on a subway; he tries to reflect America in huge, amorphous, prophetic rhetoric. He ignores his own artistic principle that art must reflect man within a "defined world." The chronicler takes over from the artist. The chronicler takes up the role of self-conscious Prophet and shouts hatred.

The Slave holds dramatic interest only in the fact that Jones, as in his other plays, makes the black man a victim, this time—and Jones fully knows this—a victim of his own philosophy. Walker delivers a prologue during which he is dressed as an old field slave; and at the end of the play, as the city explodes, he is again a slave—enslaved by mutual hatred, hatred received and returned. All has been made rotten, we are told again, as we were in *Dutchman*, by the hatred in the heritage of slavery. The Negro writer is, Jones has written, "a chronicler of the Negro's movement from African slave to American slave." The central doctrine of the prologue is "We are liars, and we are murderers."

The slave, who is Walker, who is the black man, who is Jones, is destroyed as well as destroying. The wife



knows that the black man has been robbed (like Clay in *Dutchman*) of his image of himself: "I don't even think you know who you are any more. No, I don't think you ever knew. . . . It must be a sick task keeping so many lying separate uglinesses together . . . and pretending they're something you've made and understand."

However certain this black man is of his hatred, he is also certain what it has cost him. Hatred has cost the black man everything else that he has desired from life, and it has cost him all his art. The black man has chosen to promote "a bloody situation where white and black people are killing each other . . . despite the fact that I would rather argue politics, or literature, or boxing, or anything, with you, dear Easley, with you." And the black artist has chosen bloody rebellion knowing "I have killed for all times any creative impulses I will ever have by the depravity of my murderous philosophies."

The leader of the black rebellion knows that another tyranny will result after the rebellion; he is not the Marxist visionary preparing for the happy day after the

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revolution. The harvest of slavery, with so much hatred, must be bitter; the revolution is only a case of "you had your chance, darling, now these other folks have theirs." He knows it's ugly; but in "this hideous place" there is no alternative to murder and violence. Jones no longer admits Clay's alternative, no longer sees a possible alternative in choosing to remain insane by denying violence. The black man instead seeks the sanity that comes from murder. "God, what an ugly idea," says the white liberal; head in hands, the black man replies, "I know. I know."

Throughout the text of *The Slave*, Jones has the characters talk about "ritual drama." But the play never ascends to the level of ritual drama, to any cleansing emotion. It rants. It establishes no bond between author and audience. It speaks with only one human dimension, racial hatred; its people are partial. The play doesn't even have verisimilitude: Why do the white man and his wife leave their children in the midst of a bombardment? Why does Walker sit around and talk while he should be leading his troops? Why does Walker tell his wife that their children are dead although we hear them scream at the end of the play? Real ritual drama affects one as a transcendent filling up, it exists throughout or even outside of time; this play freezes.

I don't think that *The Slave*, or the bigger question of LeRoi Jones the dramatist, can be understood without examination of Jones' dramatic credo, called "The Revolutionary Theatre," published in *Liberator*, the journal of the Afro-American Research Institute. In 1965, the year after his four off-Broadway productions, Jones reasserts that "Clay in *Dutchman*, Ray in *The Toilet*, Walker in *The Slave* are all victims." And because the black man is victimized by society, the role of black theater is clear: "The Revolutionary Theatre must Accuse and Attack anything that can be accused and attacked. It must Accuse and Attack because it is a theatre of Victims." And that is the difference between *The Slave* on the one hand and *Dutchman* and *The Toilet* on the other. In *The Slave,* Jones is writing "Revolutionary Theatre." Tension is gone because he has made up his mind to Attack and Accuse. *Dutchman* and *The Toilet* are controlled by containing form; Jones is still probing, and the result is the tension that allows art. But in the Attacking and Accusing of *The Slave*, tension is relaxed, form is gone; and propaganda, the Revolutionary Theatre, takes over.

Jones' *Liberator* essay is itself incoherent, frantic, filled with sentences in upper case, with quintuple question marks and double exclamation points. Much of it is inexplicable: "The Revolutionary Theatre must function like an incendiary pencil planted in Curtis Lemay's cap. So that when the final curtain goes down brains are splattered over the seats and the floor, and bleeding nuns must wire SOS's to Belgians with gold teeth." But its central doctrine of hatred is clear enough: "White men will cower before this theatre because it hates them. . . . The Revolutionary Theatre must hate them for hating. . . . The Revolutionary Theatre must teach them their deaths." And clear, too, is its call for destruction: "It is a political theatre, a weapon to help in the slaughter of those dim-witted fatbellied white guys who somehow believe that the rest of the world is here for them to slobber on. . . . It must crack their faces open to the mad cries of the poor. . . . Americans will hate the Revolutionary Theatre because it will be out to destroy them and whatever they believe is real. . . . The play that will split the heavens for us will be called THE DESTRUCTION OF AMERICA."

If we are to believe our courts, Jones' life has followed both his art and his theatrical credo. For all of the certitude in *The Slave* that armed rebellion would ruin the artist, the hero-victim of that play took to the streets with guns. And, the courts tell us, so did Jones take to the streets with guns in Newark during last summer's black rebellion. In *The Slave*, the black man has made up his mind to pay the price; in the streets of Newark, Jones apparently made up his mind to pay a similar price. *The Slave* is fearful in its foretelling: in it Jones announces—before Watts and Newark—what will happen and what he will do. Before the riots, *Newsweek* concluded that LeRoi Jones "writes and harangues himself out of the company of civilized men." And, the magazine went on to say, he therefore "forfeits all claim to serious attention." It is, rather, because Jones has decided to leave the company of civilized men that he demands our attention, if not for our interest in art, then for our interest in humanity.

How can the white liberal critic—interested in art and humanity—react to the drama of LeRoi Jones? Jones certainly does not expect acceptance: "My ideas revolve around the rotting and destruction of America, so I can't really expect anyone who is part of that to accept my ideas." Jones intimidates. He predicts that the white liberal critic will attack him on aesthetic grounds. And he's right. That's just what any critic who refuses to abdicate his critical judgment must do in the face of Revolutionary Theatre like *The Slave*.

Jones further intimidates the white liberal critic by insisting—as do black revolutionists both literary and non-literary—that whitey can never understand the black man. Again I suppose that Jones is right. When Jones says, "You cannot understand me," I will not deny it. I am afraid to be patronizing by saying, "I understand." I don't expect to come to understand the foul indignities heaped for centuries on the black man, nor to understand their result—for my skin is white. So how do we react, all boxed in, cowering like a Calvinist sinner before a God who has already decided he is damned? Can the critic do nothing but stand here and plead, "What do you want of me? You, LeRoi Jones, carry your heritage of slavery; I carry my heritage of guilt. Do we just stand here and stare at each other until the murder starts?"

The suffering involved in standing mute while Jones

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proposes mutual murder seems to be peculiarly the kind of suffering which many white liberals enjoy. When Jones singles out the white liberal as the black man's particular enemy, little response is heard from the self-flagellating liberal who thinks such suffering is good for us. We white liberals might indeed *need* the expiation which Jones offers for our guilt. But if we accept the inevitability of his prophecies, we will be as destructive as Jones.

I think that the white liberal who refuses to give up his rationality must see that Jones' art and philosophy are suicidal as well as murderous. His philosophy is ultimately a betrayal of all of humanity, and particularly of the black man. In fury and despair, Jones says that the black man must accept the white man's way of suppression and murder. This is a betrayal not only because it proceeds on the incredible assumption of *The Slave* that the black man could *win* an armed rebellion. (The white ghetto will not stand still, enjoying its punishment, as do we white liberals.) But the Jones philosophy is also a betrayal because it denies the black man the moral superiority over the white man, the moral superiority of non-violence. The conclusion of *The Slave* is that the answer for the black man is to find himself, and at the same time destroy himself, through killing the white man. But there is no finding there. There is only loss, and a madness. The victim would remain a victim.

So, in spite of the fact that Jones has the power to intimidate into paralysis, the only sane response is to break out, to challenge the rules as Jones has laid them down. I will attack his art on aesthetic grounds, for when form is shattered in art, no shared experience results. And although admitting that full understanding between white and black may be impossible, movement toward understanding must be continued, for we all know that it has been started. We *can* all still remember the "We Shall Overcome" days.

I don't think that Jones, deep down, believes himself when he insists that no understanding is possible. For he writes. He lets white men produce his plays for white audiences. If he truly felt that we could never come to know each other, he might as well talk to a tape recorder. He wears African robes; he insists on calling himself an Afro-American: but he has come to us in his writing. We must assume that he has something to say to us.

We hear obviously enough the hatred for which he has willingly sacrificed his art. Our human reaction is that his vision is so hate-ridden that it is insane, and that we must reject it, must not stand mute before it and watch racial hatred become a self-fulfilling prophecy. But after I reject him, I still am left with fear. *That* cannot be escaped or rejected. And maybe fear finally is the one shared experience that Jones communicates. Perhaps, at this point, poised for the horror which is promised for the summer, the shared experience of fear is what he has to say to us. Perhaps *it* can shake us into the doing—which could bring effective change within the political order.

Is there time for such change? Jones says that political change is only the liberal's game, "palliatives and symbols to remind him of his own good faith." So the fear remains. Is there time? And the prospect of mutual madness.

LeROI JONES—II

PURSUED BY THE FURIES

PAUL VELDE

The blacks may not be the only ones who want to chuck the whole of Western civilization and start over again, but they seem to be the only ones the majority of whites are willing to believe, or at least to make a good pretense at it. LeRoi Jones, for instance, is taken literally when he calls for the death of all white devils, or whatever. The question with Jones is just how one should take him. To take him seriously as a racist, but not as a poet, is the usual reaction, but that is too easy, and perhaps dangerous as well.

The most recent Jones sally against the devils was his piece for voices and music which played in an East Village theater to a mixed audience of blacks and whites attending a benefit for the jailed leaders of California's Black Panther Party. The piece was both a proto-liturgy for black raciality and, more interestingly, an attempt to get back to the origins of blackness. Rather, one should say that Jones tried to evoke those beginnings, or any beginnings that promised to work. On the most obvious level, the effect of the performance was to raise the tension between the blacks and whites to a point that at times seemed close to combat.

Jones calls his piece "Home on the Range," which apparently drops with sarcasm on the right ears. It begins with a long stretch of electronic mix, soul sounds rather effectively blended with what seemed to be African and Arabic influences. "Black," says a male voice, repeat-

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ing the word at intervals, then alternating it with "blackness." As the intervals become shorter, the voice takes on a chanting quality: "black, blackness, blackness, black." At this, one settles back into the seat, hopefully for the duration. Gradually other elements are introduced. One line, "older than time," seemed particularly suggestive, and gives a fair idea of the direction and tone of the earlier parts of Jones' "Range." Other lines had to do with truth and sex, all asserting in one way or another the mystique and mystery of blackness. Up to this point, however, the reference is only to color. The chanting is followed by a litany of attributes, "black is beautiful" on through ultimates of being, time, creation, godhead, arriving, presumably, at an ontological wonder of blackness. The color is no longer an attribute, but being itself. Despite the blatant hocus pocus of the manipulation, and the language which was nothing special, the overall result was a quite moving recitation that curiously did seem to touch the chords of racial history.

Unfortunately for Jones' purpose, he is trapped by his reliance on English. In the end, it is the racial drama of the West, not of Africa that he traverses with his thesaurus categories. Perhaps this accounts for the certain pathetic quality of all superlatives. For if national and cultural histories have to do with exploits, defeats and accomplishments, racial histories with their primordial expansions and contractions carry the weight of the sheer misery of existence. They are creations, too, for race is one of the excuses for necessity in life, whether told in the woe of the Jews or the Manichaean luminations of Jones. To have sat through an an hour or so of "Home on the Range" is truly to be home again, with the terrorized voices of Masters' Spoon River when the grave is closing in. Finally, the piece gets to dealing with whites specifically and in terms hardly recommended for sensitive souls. Jones had made the same points in a talk earlier in the evening, that blacks are more natural, more creative than whites, who are imitative and who basically want to be like blacks. "Blacks are naturally superior; the whites will submit," was the message.

Jones shares the poverty of the West, its dreadful absolutes, and its hysterical drive to cut the Gordian knot. Whether this inheritance will be sufficient to liberate him and his black brothers from racial servitude is uncertain. It all depends on what is meant by liberation. But at this stage of Jones' investigations into blackness, the result appears to be a militant form of black racism. Inasmuch as he is a poet laboring in English and a product of a literary tradition that prides itself on its essential humanism and its moral stance as critic of society, this has been more disconcerting to whites, educated or not, than the rhetoric of Malcolm X or the earlier Marcus Garvey.

Indeed, when the New Jersey judge cited a line from Jones' poetry ("Up against the wall, motherfucker!") when sentencing him to prison, few liberals did not experience mixed feelings over the matter. Under normal circumstances Jones would have been a cultural hero, on principle if not out of personal preference. He is a cultural hero to blacks, and to some whites for reasons that are not necessarily masochistic. (His up-against-the-wall line was what Columbia students shouted at police over the barricades, and some quite non-violent types have been known to sense the poetry of the line.) But for most liberals the New Jersey scene was a sorry business best forgotten. Judge Learned Hand, whose eloquent defense of the Smith Act was once set up as a model of responsible liberalism, but which few remember now, would undoubtedly have known better than to hold Jones' poetry against him. But it is still a sorry business to see a poet go to jail. Some argue, however, that Jones is not a very good poet. Maybe a national poetry commission could be established to do to Jones what the boxing commission did to Muhammad Ali.

But if Jones is still to be regarded as a poet, then it only makes sense that he be allowed the same complexity of position and statement that his fellow poets are. That implies in part the recognition that he cannot safely skip over the difficult parts of his development, or that the final outcome of his investigations into his human condition should be anymore known to him than ours is to us.

If Jones commanded black legions marching on the country with guns, this might be a different story. But as it happens, the only legions Jones commands are in his imagination and in ours. There is an imaginary battle going on between blacks and whites in this country, not unlike the chess battles fought by Chinese generals in lieu of a real slaughter. Nobody seems to want to get killed, though clearly a lot of people want to do some killing. The black community so far has managed to confine their slaughter to a mental action. The same cannot be said of the whites with their gun-wielding police. However, if the fullness of the actual event is not necessary to resolve the racial conflict in America, then the liberal celebrators of the American experience can for once say that this country has matured.

At this point the outcome is very much in doubt. Jones and the whole problem of racism in the country calls upon whites to truly use their imaginations. Jones is performing the minimum Western ritual to bring this about, possibly because he is in no position to do otherwise. But it is an indication of the fear and immaturity he faces that a New Jersey judge mistook a line of poetry for a gun in hand. The same literal-minded approach fills the communications media everyday. This is not to say that Jones is not perfectly capable of using a gun. But then so is pretty much everybody. The point is that right now neither side has yet been compelled to go the full route of race war. If racists do their work with fire and steel, then perhaps it is not very useful to see Jones as a racist. Because Jones works on the head. There is a difference, even though some fail to see it. Poetry has its uses.

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THE STAGE

It would, I think, be idle to dispute whether the theater began as word or gesture; the two, ultimately, flourished conjointly and redounded to the theater's glory. But today's theater has decided that the word is unimportant, a mere pretext for gesture; gradually and disastrously, the word is being squeezed into the background, if not elbowed out altogether. And the gesture is becoming ruder and ruder, to be reduced finally to a single symbolic—indeed, literal—obscenity.

Two current productions corroborate these melancholy speculations. About *Dionysus in 69* I'll tell you next time; for today there is Rochelle Owens' *Futz*. This is a very short play—the author cannot sustain dialogue—and what words there are are mostly hollow, uncouth, obscene, or even meaningless grunts. The play concerns one Cyrus Futz, a farmer who prefers to have intercourse with his pig, Amanda. This drives the spurned village whore, Majorie Satz, wild with rage, and her family mad with vengefulness. The village idiot, Oscar Loop (like all Miss Owens' characters, he inclines toward self-contradiction, and can at times be her metaphysical mouthpiece) observes Cyrus and Amanda *in flagrante*, and commits a sex murder for which he is hanged. Whereupon the combined fury of the Satzes, the villagers, and the law lead to Futz's imprisonment and eventual murder.

Miss Owens wants us, I suppose, to see in this the calvary of the nonconforming individual, the greater bestiality of the supposedly normal majority, and society's cowardice in not daring to espouse an animality it secretly craves. But even assuming that we agree with the author's theses—one of which seems to me old hat, one questionable, and one ludicrous—they are not couched in a dramatic event, a set of characters, a language that can move any part of us other than the stomach.

The construction of the play is awkward: tiny open-ended vignettes in which the characters burble pretentious nonsense or infantile naughtiness, while the narrator recites the action. The people are all demented, depraved or retarded, and not even Futz, who under pressure cravenly denies Amanda, commands our interest or sympathy. As for the language, it has three modes. (1) Pretentious and preposterous: "sticking his fingers out like stone worms," "how can well I go describing on?" "his kneebones high like the two hemispheres," "my choppers say yes to your head under their feet." (2) Synthetic hillbilly, a cross between Dogpatch and Volapük: "You make it wus tan it is mentionin' the pig . . . O o o o so indecent I am, and now the filty dreams 'ill come. O Gods help meee that we shoulda both laid with a sow." (3) Scatology, obscenity, baby-talk and grunts: "HAHA-Haaaah-shhhhhushy yeah yeah," "Yeeeiiiiiey Oyu Big man-bloke!" and much more, less suitable for quoting. Each of these elements is painful in itself; together, they are well-nigh unendurable.

The play, however, is only a skeleton, albeit an indecently jiggling one. To put flesh on it required the services of the chief purveyor of bare meat to off-Broadway (*Tom Paine*) and Broadway (*Hair*), Tom O'Horgan. He has developed a directorial scenario encasing the play that is almost totally independent from and even at odds with the text, which it matches only in beastliness. The actors, and more particularly a chorus encircling the action, crawl, wallow, leap and roll over one another, sometimes piling up in a human pyramid, more often simulating various types of human, porcine, or mixed intercourse. At the same time, they have been arbitrarily assigned lines of the narration, which they deliver, singly or chorically, in speech, whispers, sing-song or shouts, all perfectly divorced from any inner logic. The stage sound and movement become an amorphous weltering and word-mongering, a veritable hogomachy. The actors, moreover, accompany themselves on peculiar instruments with O'Horgan's rather ordinary tunes.

Fluid staging is, of course, a good thing, but exactly what is flowing here? Things are either pointless, as when Oscar Loop's mother, visiting her doomed son in jail, sticks her foot in his shirt, and he whirls her around by it like a windmill. Or there is a point, but a crude and hardly relevant one, as when Mrs. Loop suddenly bares her breasts and starts suckling Oscar, who then sticks his head under her skirt as she says "A son and his mother are holy," while the chorus makes obscene clucking sounds and symbolically ejaculates in their direction. But Miss Owens herself is fully capably of ending a scene with Oscar raising his toes to his nose "with a monkey's grace and whiff[ing them] deeply." On Miss Owens' Ossa, do we need O'Horgan's Pelion?

The acting is disciplined enough, if neatly executed group copulation is a standard. Of performances as such there can be little question here, though John Bakos as Futz and Peter Craig as the Sheriff produce the right attitudes and tonalities. Seth Allen's Oscar and Sally Kirkland's Narrator strike me as pure—or, rather, impure—ham; and, as Marjorie, Beth Porter is so pungently porcine as to outswine Amanda. Amanda herself never appears, presumably because a proper pig wouldn't stoop to such an enterprise.

After it is all over, including some ten minutes of introductory screening from Ed Emshwiller's film, *Relativity*, showing the slaughtering of hogs, I am left with little more than the realization that if there is anything worse than a pig in a poke, it's a poke in a pig. But, no doubt, this will prove another triumph for O'Horgan, the hot new director who has shot up in our sky like an inverted meteor, and who will now be lauded for the brilliance with which he converted the entire stage into one

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vast pigsty. I wonder, though, what he and Miss Owens thought they were doing: liberating in a grand, obscene gesture our dangerously repressed animal instincts? Or are they both just trying, with shrewd commercialism, to live high off the hog? (*At the Theatre de Lys*)

JOHN SIMON

GAMES MOVIES PLAY

THE SCREEN

Movie fans who also like Anagrams, Crossword Puzzles and Bridge (not Duplicate; it's *too* hard) should find "Petulia," Richard Lester's very difficult new film, right up their alley. So should cineastes, who will find Lester's techniques with quick cuts, subliminal flashes, distorted chronology at their brilliant best. The basic story (in the screenplay written by Lawrence B. Marcus from John Hasse's novel, *Me and the Arch Kook Petulia*) is simple enough and almost soap opera material: a young married woman whose neurotic husband beats her up every now and then falls in love with a divorced, kindly doctor but just can't break away from handsome hubby and his very wealthy upper-class family. This plot if told straight would be a nothing, but jazzed up by Lester and seemingly starting in the middle and jumping around from the present to flashbacks and flashforwards, "Petulia" has a fascinating quality that is hard to resist.

I hope some of the difficulties in following the movie that mixes past, present and future out of chronological order won't scare audiences away. Lester makes his viewers work, but the results, with his expertly visualized comments on today's thoughtless society, are well worth the effort. At times the satire is bitter and then again the burlesque is hilarious. Again and again Lester is saying we have got too far away from human warmth and concern for our fellow men. Properly lampooned are the gadgets in the modern motel to which Petulia and Archie, the doctor, sneak off for a night and then leave in disgust, or the cold efficiency of the hospital where Archie operates, or the utter craziness of the large supermarkets, or the razzmatazz that goes on at a big charity ball. Contrasting with the exposés of today's foolishness and false values are some lovely scenes of San Francisco's parks and gardens, nicely glazed over with romantic, soft-focus color photography.

The Richard Lester-Ray Wagner production of "Petulia" is excellent, with its many fine shots of San Francisco, John Barry's lively and appropriate musical score which he conducted, and an outstanding cast. Under Lester's good direction, this cast works together, and while no one gives *the* performance of the year, they all come through well for the whole: Julie Christie as the arch-kook Petulia whose cute wackiness could become a pain in the neck but whose suffering makes us overlook some of her kookie efforts at abandon; George C. Scott as the somewhat staid doctor who puts up with more foolishness than most men would, and even finds it a welcome escape from boredom; Shirley Knight as Archie's ex-wife, who contributed greatly to Archie's boredom and who regretted his leaving her; Richard Chamberlain as Petulia's thoroughly unpleasant, clean-American-boy-type husband who's still tied to his rich that's-what-money's-for family; Joseph Cotten as his father, who, having broken his son, expects Petulia to stay with him in spite of everything—and everything is awful; and several more fine players in the supporting cast: Kathleen Widdoes, Arthur Hill, Pippa Scott, and Vincent Arias as the Mexican lad who becomes the center for more quarrels between Petulia and her sick husband.

Except for "The Knack," which is my favorite, I think this is Richard Lester's best picture to date. Perhaps his distortion-of-time style is not exactly new; Bergman, Renais and others have used it, and Virginia Woolf would have loved it. Lester, himself, said in an interview, "The film is extremely difficult and complex in that it requires the audience to think ahead. But this is indeed the natural way people think." I'm not sure, Mr. Lester, that I think ahead this way, but I was certainly engrossed by "Petulia."

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

JAMES F. COTTER

PRIMER

Red, green, and gold, leaves burst
like stained-glass windows
in the white chapel of day.
These are called *trees.*

Red, brown, and gold, trees burn
like sudden bonfires
on the heaped fields of noon.
This is called *fall.*

Gold, brown, and red, fall streams
like shining hair
on the soft hills of dusk.
This is called *death.*

Brown, red, and gold, death gleams
like glazed mosaics
on the dim floor of dawn.
These are called *leaves.*

Red, green, and gold, leaves burst
like stained-glass windows
in the white chapel of day.

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BOOKS

Pauline Kael: tangents become theses

Kiss Kiss Bang Bang

PAULINE KAEL

Atlantic-Little, Brown, $7.95

F. A. MACKLIN

It is easy to recognize what guides most film critics in their approaches (e.g., Andrew Sarris' sense of the *auteur*, Dwight Macdonald's concern with culture, John Simon's dedication to art, Bosley Crowther's morality), but Pauline Kael's criticism does not come from any such commitment. In her new book, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang,* as always, her source is herself. She is the star of her criticism; the picaresque film critic; Holly Goheavily of the film world. She is ambition with brains; an odd composite of sophistication, insight, vulgarity, envy, intelligence, and anti-intellectuality.

Miss Kael draws personal criticism because this is the natural end of *her* criticism. One never forgets her person; she does not allow him to. Kael offers herself as ideal. She is the force that dominates. Kael's criticism is filled with personal observations; she mends a black silk dress before a public appearance; she dated a prizefighter; she can't remember who took her to the senior prom. Tangents become theses. She proves her concepts by employing an acquaintance or an overheard conversation: an insensitive woman in the audience at *Bonnie & Clyde*; a silly woman she baits at a party (*Blow-Up*); a Negress speaking idiom on a subway platform (*Falstaff*).

Personal revelations can be effective, but when they are given the status of crucial evidence they distort criticism. James Agee, who died in 1955, is often celebrated as our best film critic, and he was a very personal critic, allowing much of his person—and spirit—to filter through his criticism. But he had warmth, deference, and playfulness—qualities Kael does not eloquently possess.

Kael's strength (and it is a valuable one) is her insight into popular culture—the mass media aspects of film. She is a brilliant exposer of cant and hypocrisy. On popular films (particularly American) she is among the best critics writing, because of her knowledge of both Hollywood and mass mentalities. For these subjects her attacks seem justified and complete. " . . . it occurred to me that this preposterous mixture of wanting to do good and yet evading the real problems—not telling the simple truth if it might prejudice your case—was the basic cheat of Hollywood message movies." She understands the promise, the struggles, and the deceit of mass movie entertainment. She has definitive discussions of *Bonnie & Clyde*, Marlon Brando, the myth of the cowboy star, and an account of the making of the film *The Group* (though this piece falls short of her usual style). The essay on *The Group* has not been published before; most of the other essays were originally published in such magazines as *The New Yorker* and *The New Republic*. She has also included film notes, many of them revised from the notes she did for the Cinema Guild and studio theaters in Berkeley.

Miss Kael is also bright on the topic of youth. This is the closest she comes to a commitment (other than her serviceable "honesty"). She is committed to the spirit of youth: "The greatest achievement [of "Before the Revolution"] is that you come out of the theatre, not dull and depressed the way you feel after movies that insult your intelligence, but *elated*—restored to that youthful ardor when all hopes are raised at once." She sees Jean-Luc Godard as the director of youth: "Godard in himself is where the action is." But her commitment to youth and its value is not entirely affirmative, and this is perhaps the most interesting part of her criticism. She sees in youth "brutalism" and the "banal." And she realizes the failure of Godard to achieve intellectual fullness. Kael's ambivalence toward youth and Godard is her most generous criticism; it is when she is close to Agee. With the often fatuous Godard she treats herself to critical kindness; she is not as demanding as usual. One welcomes the ambivalence but questions the vacillation.

There is no vacillation or ambivalence in Kael's reaction to many "art" films (e.g., *Blow-Up*). She has an obsessive scorn for these films (and for "meaning," educators, and other critics). It is her worst and most circuitous criticism. It swoops to ad hominem levels. Of Antonioni's *Red Desert* she writes: "What *was* intended? No one could be sure. . . ." So she centers her critique on a woman: "I once . . . visited in Beverly Hills. . . ." She also attacks

HOLDEN VILLAGE
"A Place Apart"
"HOLDEN VILLAGE IS EXTRAORDINARY"
—Sunset Magazine, June 1965

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the audience: " . . . which fantasy of themselves do they adore?" She flagrantly scuffs the film aside.

Her piece on Bergman's *Persona* is also a lesson in indirect but taloned criticism. She supposes that if there is an interpretation that can be validated " . . . it is so buried that it doesn't function in the work." Instead Kael criticizes educated audiences and advertising.

Her most flapping critique is on *Blow-Up*. It is a film that can be chastised validly, but Kael does not do so. Instead, again, she makes mystification work for her (shades of Walter Kerr!); she writes, " . . . it may also be relevant that Antonioni pulls a Marceau-like expressionist finale in this picture, one of those fancy finishes that seems to say so much (but what?) . . ." Kael doesn't figure it out; instead she damns. She attacks the critics (as always) and renders a special assault upon a foolish woman she met at a party who liked the film but couldn't explain it, thereby revealing—to all the world—Kael's superiority to the film, the director, people who like Marceau, and women at parties. But this isn't criticism; it's flair.

Kael is almost paranoic in her continual attacks on other critics. It is fairly common knowledge that Kael has been aided in her ascendancy by some critics only to abuse them when they were no longer useful. Her acknowledgement of her first book, *I Lost It at the Movies*, to Dwight Macdonald received a wry reaction from him when he found that ". . . of the thirteen references to me [Macdonald] in the index, five are neutral while eight are hostile and, in most cases, unfair."

Are all critics other than Pauline Kael idiots, are all her acquaintances fools? Are all audiences vain and false? Are films of ennui [*Blow-Up, Darling, La Guerre Est Finie*] as mindless as what they portray? It seems Miss Kael would have us think so.

Her technique may work with simple films, with almost all Hollywood films, but when films are more complex Miss Kael's approach seems sly and self-aggrandizing. She is master of the simple film, but the more difficult the film the less appropriate, the less essential, she is. Basically, in *Kiss Kiss Bang, Bang*, Miss Kael is self-indulgent.

The Popes in the Twentieth Century

CARLO FALCONI

Little, Brown, $10

SERGE HUGHES

Sometime around the turn of the century, Antonio Labriola, one of the regrettably few bright Italian Marxists of that and subsequent times, made the observation that in Italy Catholicism depended heavily on two basic imports: German Catholic theology and sturdily constructed German confessionals. Labriola, as usual, was partly right. In the generation that preceded his in the early Risorgimento, thinkers of the stature of Gioberti, Rosmini, Manzoni and Capponi did a good deal to revitalize a faith that had almost been reduced to myopic conformity. These men elaborated a number of authentic "styles" ("style" as need, not embellishment) proper to Catholics in Italy who were seeking not only the kingdom of God but Christian solutions to peculiarly Italian problems.

For many reasons, however, some of which are easy to understand and others that are still baffling, the effect of those thinkers on subsequent generations was negligible. Italy remained "Catholic," but the outstanding traits of the national religion were all too often a caricature notion of prudence and an over-appraisal of the virtues of obedience and discipline.

Just what the lack of original theological sophistication led to, of course, is not easy to determine. It did not necessarily make the many forms of the imitation of Christ any harder or indeed rarer in the Italian peninsula than elsewhere. But to judge from what has happened to some complicated Catholics—though the simplest of us is quite complicated—it would seem that more often than not this restricted Catholicism led to a kind of chronic malaise that often lapsed into a flabby ironic approximation of faith. Until recently

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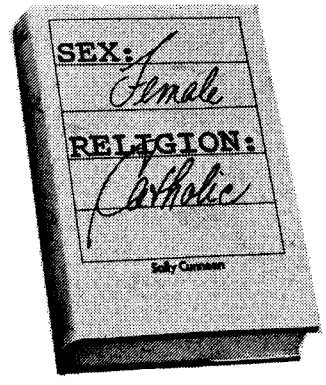

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this situation was aggravated by the fact that a peculiarly muted spiritual life went hand in hand with some outward political successes of Catholicism that are rightfully considered no less than spectacular.

As a rule these successes were initiated and brought to a close by the papacy—and the papacy almost invariably acted with the consent and wholehearted approval of the overwhelming majority of the laity and clergy. The laity and clergy supported the uncompromising intransigence of Pius X to the new Italian state. They backed the more conciliatory policies of Benedict XV. They applauded the most famous achievement of the pontificate of Pope Pius XI, the Concordat. It was only with the advent of Pope John that a pope fully realized how the success of a policy of cautious theology combined with political preoccupations led in the last analysis to triumphs of a sad and brittle necessity. It is proper, therefore, that the Italian popes of this century from Leo XIII on should be interrogated closely as to the wisdom of their policy—and all the more since they allowed a proper deference and respect for the successor of St. Peter to degenerate into something with a disconcerting resemblance to the "cult of personality."

This particular study of the popes of this period is written from the point of view of one for whom Pope John came too late, one for whom the example of the popes since Pius X, with the great exception of Benedict XV, did little to make the claims of the Catholic Church more plausible. But in particular, this is the work of an Italian (and there were many of them) who was infuriated by Pope Pius XII—at his very best and at his very worst.

Signor Falconi's intense feelings, unfortunately, are not counterbalanced by anything resembling a sense of humor or mellow wisdom. In more than one passage his tone becomes disturbingly indistinguishable from that rhetoric of unctuous religiosity he knows so well and so justly abhors. The soggy, swollen attempt at irony of the last paragraphs of the essay on Pope Pius XII is only one example of lapses that are too frequent for reader-comfort. And though Falconi has made a clean and honorable break with a religion he can no longer accept, he has not as yet freed himself of a certain penchant for declamatory homiletics. There's a good deal of preaching in these essays, some very tired debating techniques, and a neophyte's delight with the interpretive possibilities of psychology.

This is all the more regrettable since in general the better part of his judgments are sensible and quite acceptable to the relaxed believer and unbeliever. Few will argue with him as to the well-meaning obtuseness of Pius X with respect to Modernism. No one will quarrel with him as to the enigmatic character of Pius XI, or the dangers of his authoritarian temperament. It is generally recognized, even by his most intense admirers, that after his illness in 1954 Pope Pius XII was a different man from what he had been before. And even when differences of interpretation come up, Falconi's point of view —with the possible exception of the vehement essay on Pius XII, who is denounced for his superstitious belief in the primacy of legalism—is usually plausible, if not convincing.

It is a shame, consequently, that these essays do not show more traces of the spirit of equanimity of Pope John, whom Falconi admires. But this business of sizing up popes is a difficult one—even when they are judged in the light of the contributions of Pope John XXIII. In the strange land of Catholic Italy, where at one moment the pope's importance is fanatically over-assessed and at another absurdly minimized, it is hard to find the ironic, affectionate center.

The Last Unicorn

PETER S. BEAGLE

Viking, $4.95

HAROLD JAFFE

A talking raven who steals baloneys; a middle-aged gentleman who resides in a mausoleum and plays chess with specters; two young suicides who meet

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and find true love after death. "What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth," Keats wrote; and Peter S. Beagle's imagination went far afield in his whimsical first novel, *A Fine and Private Place,* published in 1960. There was much inventiveness, charm, and quirky beauty in individual scenes; the allegorical truth of the characters, their situations, developed leisurely, emanated naturally without violating the integrity of the fiction. Death, Beagle seemed to be saying, is life without feeling. A familiar enough admonishment, certainly, but I have never felt its authenticity quite in the same way.

To be sure, there were defects in this first novel: occasionally the richness of the texture seemed overwrought; the conversations of the Jewish matron, Mrs. Klapper, sounded tinny—as comparable characters rarely sound in, say, Malamud, Bellow or Roth. But these instances were rare, and Beagle was, after all, only twenty-one years old.

Now, eight years later, in his second novel, *The Last Unicorn,* Beagle has blended fantasy and reality even more deftly, and has largely ironed out his previous stylistic difficulties. After hundreds of years of solitary happiness, a unicorn is brashly wakened from her innocence by the chance remark of a hunter who has invaded her wood. She feels suddenly compelled to undertake a quest for her lost brethren who (she later learns) are being held captive at Haggard Castle by the wicked King Haggard and the inscrutable Red Bull.

Everywhere are potential victimizers: the unicorn's faultless beauty tempts even honest citizens into wanting to possess her, but she eludes them. A most unusual and enterprising witch, Mommy Fortuna, is not to be denied: the unicorn is captured while asleep and awakens to find herself in cage number nine of Mommy Fortuna's "Midnight Carnival." A manticore, dragon, harpy, spider, satyr, the Midgard Serpent, Cerberus the three-headed dog, and the unicorn—all, as Mommy Fortuna has it, "creatures of the night, brought to light." These few chapters are the high points of the novel: Beagle seems to delight in writing about the "carnival," and his prose is magical, his instinct for detail unerring.

The unicorn is saved from certain destruction by a charmingly inept wizard named Schmendrick, a character the author lavishes much attention upon, and who emerges finally as a convincing allegorical representation of the artist. Another disciple, Molly Grue, joins Schmendrick and the unicorn in the quest. Always the miraculous is juxtaposed with the mundane: a prophetic butterfly intones a riddle about the Red Bull and caps it with, "Let nothing you dismay, but don't be half-safe." There are ballads about goblins and Robin Hoods, then—"Won't you come home, Bill Bailey," and, "Buckle down, Winsocki. . . ." In this way the fable on the stage is fused with the seemingly unfabulous existence of the audience. On the one hand, Beagle is saying that the same magic as there is in his tale exists in our sloganized lives. But to the cynics he may also be saying that if we think unicorns and wizards are unreal, we should examine the "verities" of our own lives.

I won't divulge the surprises that await our travelers at King Haggard's castle, but be prepared for a witch's curse, a handsome prince, a curious cave, a horned fish. . . . Beagle's remarkable inventiveness in tangling his plot is equaled by the skill with which he unravels it.

Inevitably, critics have compared *The Last Unicorn* to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings.* Beagle's book is less ambitious, yet it comes closer to poetry. While Tolkien's fine energy was largely directed at keeping the plot rolling, Beagle is interested in texture as much as structure: he meanders, embroiders, occasionally fusses too much with his palette, but usually manages to imbue his characters and situations with an incandescence as bright as the supernal glow of his unicorn's horn. *The Last Unicorn* is an exquisite little fable, no more —but certainly enough.

REVIEWERS

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 427)

wrong target and some of his shots are pretty wild. Cohen is with us, not against us. Social Security can well be defended, and extended, despite some regressive aspects of the tax; we do need to push for jobs for ADC mothers on a large scale, because that's what they want, too. And it's dirty writing to put quotes about "welfare whores" in the article, leaving the reader to infer that Cohen ever used such a term pejoratively. Let's fight the common enemy, not each other.

JOSEPH HOURIHAN
CHARLES LEBEAUX
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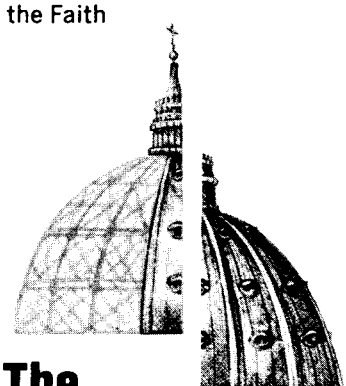
An explosive portrait of the Catholic radicals and activists in America today . . . what they are fighting for . . . and what their challenge means to the Church and the Faith



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